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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM

TO : Mr. Dean Acheson

FROM : EUR - Foy D. Kohler

SUBJECT: Transmitting two papers requested by you.

JUN 23 1961

In accordance with your recent request, I am enclosing two copies each of the following papers prepared in the Office of German Affairs:

1. The Importance of Berlin.
2. Possible Arrangements with the Soviets on Berlin Under Varying Hypotheses as to the Effectiveness of the Western Deterrent.

Enclosures.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF BERLIN

The importance of Berlin as a symbol of Western determination and ability to prevent further Communist expansion and, more specifically, of the earnestness of US intentions and capabilities with respect to additional Soviet encroachments in Europe, cannot be overemphasized.

Soviet actions for the past twelve years indicate their clear understanding of the importance of this symbol. There seems to be little doubt but that the progressive Soviet objectives are: separation of Berlin from West Germany; establishment of the so-called "free city"; incorporation of Berlin into East Germany; consolidation of the East German regime (and further consolidation of control over Eastern Europe); and extension from this base of Soviet control throughout Germany.

The struggle for the city is the focal point of the much larger East-West struggle. If we yield in Berlin, the pressure will be increased for Communist control of all Germany, and a Communist-controlled Germany would be but a stepping-stone to a Communist-controlled Europe. If we yield to aggressive Communism on what may seem to some to be the minor issue of Berlin, we will subsequently be faced with renewed aggression on a broader front. It is a question of standing at Berlin, or Paris, or New York.

Our Berlin "Guarantee"

Berlin's importance for the US is largely intangible but nonetheless undeniable. The current significance of the city for our foreign policy can scarcely be exaggerated. Since 1948 we have, by our own choice, made Berlin the example and the symbol of our determination and our ability to defend the free parts of the world against Communist aggression. We have frequently reiterated our "guarantee" that we shall treat any attack against Berlin from any quarter as an attack upon our forces and upon ourselves. We have more recently given our commitment a more extended — though rather nebulous — significance by using such language as not abandoning the free people of Berlin or of not tolerating the unilateral infringement of our rights. The UK and France have joined us in the basic "Berlin guarantee", and the other NATO Powers have associated themselves with it, but it is universally regarded as being meaningful only to the extent that the US is involved. US prestige is totally committed.

Results of Abandonment

It is a commonplace that our abandonment of Berlin, however disguised, would be taken as an indication of our unreadiness to meet our defense commitments, and thus would have a shattering effect on NATO and our other alliances. This can obviously not be proved empirically, but it represents the consensus of knowledgeable opinion on the subject. The risk of a loss of Berlin under conditions of US withdrawal in the face of Soviet pressure are, therefore, tremendous.

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This may be somewhat of an oversimplification, but it may be possible to conceive of a US withdrawal under circumstances (for example, the unwillingness of the Germans or of our other Western Allies themselves to face a general war for the maintenance of the Allied position) in which we could salvage something. But the risk of a loss of Berlin, regardless of the circumstances, would be grave.

If the Soviets were to achieve their ends in Berlin, Western Europeans would become increasingly convinced that Soviet military power had reached a point where Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe could no longer be challenged. Western concessions would be interpreted as confirming the existence of the dynamic "status quo" of the Soviets on their own terms and the failure of US efforts to contain the Soviet Union.

The crucial question in the minds of Continental Europeans would be that of their own security. They would probably conclude that the USSR, having disposed of "containment" and "rollback", would be in a position to consolidate its gains by increasing its direct political influence in all Europe. Most Western Europeans would believe that the US had abandoned the policy of opposing Soviet expansion at all points on the periphery of the Communist world in favor of a policy of political settlements, and that the US no longer had the will, or perhaps the capability, to confront the USSR over issues involving the Continent. The fear of war might subside, but it would be replaced by anxiety over the prospect of ultimate Soviet domination of Western Europe through economic and political pressure, nuclear blackmail, and subversion.

Except in the Federal Republic, the reaction on the Continent would probably be one of relief that war had been avoided mixed with grave forebodings about the future. Support for NATO would probably wane and a tendency to seek accommodation with the USSR develop.

In West Germany the consequences of the loss of Berlin would be most severe. Most of the populace would cease to base hopes for German reunification on reliance on the West. Adenauer's single-minded policy of exclusive dependence on the West, particularly the US, would be discredited. There might well develop a movement toward an accommodation with the USSR under which the integrity of the Federal Republic would be guaranteed in return for West German political, economic, and military concessions. Or the Federal Republic could turn in the other direction toward a dangerous bellicosity under right wing radicals.

The US power position would be seriously damaged.

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US Advantages in Berlin are Soviet Disadvantages

The importance of Berlin to both the Soviets and ourselves lies in the fact that the city is the focal point of the whole East-West struggle. Our assets there are their liabilities. Their gains would be our losses. The Soviets are acutely aware of the manifold and compelling reasons why Berlin is important to us. Indeed, it is because of these same reasons, as seen from the other side, that they have made the city a priority target in the cold war.

The US and its allies, including the courageous people of West Berlin, have succeeded in keeping this exposed city free in the face of continual Communist threats and pressures. As a result, Berlin has become a symbol of the struggle of free men everywhere to preserve their freedom and--more importantly--an example proving that they can succeed.

For the people behind the Iron Curtain, Berlin serves as a beacon of hope and the most convincing proof possible of Western unity, strength, and determination.

For the East Germans Berlin has a particular significance as a link with the free world, and, as the traditional capital of the German nation, a symbol of hope for eventual reunification.

Berlin is not only a window in the Iron Curtain through which non-Communists can get some very instructive glimpses of what the "workers' paradise" really is, but also an escape hatch, through which victims of Communist tyranny can flee to freedom without too much difficulty. The refugee flow reflects internal difficulties facing the East German regime. This is one reason why the Soviets find the Berlin situation so irritating. East Berliners and East zone refugees continue to move into West Berlin in large numbers. Despite Communist propaganda to the contrary, the refugee flow is not discouraged by the West. In fact, high officials of the Federal Republic often appeal to the population of East Germany to remain there as long as they possibly can. The West Germans have no desire to see East Germany depopulated or deprived of its best elements. Nevertheless, the refugees continue to flow into Berlin at a rate of more than 450 every single day in what is undoubtedly the largest sustained political exodus of modern times. It is, in addition, one of the most damning indictments any regime has ever suffered. Particularly significant is the fact that a large proportion of the refugees are from the younger generation and from the professional, technical, scientific, and skilled labor groups facing the East German regime with damaging shortages in these vital personnel categories.

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Because of its location deep behind the Iron Curtain, West Berlin, with its climate of freedom and material prosperity, serves as a living refutation of Communist dogma and propaganda. Contrasting sharply with neighboring totalitarian East Berlin and surrounding Soviet zone, it provides an education in freedom for those Communists or pro-Communists whose minds may not yet be completely closed to the truth.

West Berlin is a tremendous asset to the West and a tremendous liability to the East because without West Berlin, Ulbricht cannot stabilize East Germany, and without a stable East Germany, Khrushchev cannot stabilize the East European bloc.

In addition to helping stabilize the bloc, realization of the Soviet "Free City of West Berlin" would:

- (a) signify a further dismemberment of Germany, with West Berlin as a third German state;
- (b) greatly improve the possibilities of legal recognition of East Germany, thus perpetuating the division of Germany;
- (c) lead to the abolition of human rights in West Berlin under the guise of preventing espionage, subversion, anti-Communist propaganda, etc.;
- (d) allow large para-military units to remain in East Berlin, including the so-called People's Police and Workers' Militia, with the East German Army permitted to enter East Berlin freely and a score of Soviet divisions surrounding the city;
- (e) force the nearest useful Western troops to stay more than one hundred miles from Berlin; and
- (f) compromise the entire Western position by demoralizing millions of people not only in Europe, but in other free countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

For the West the loss of freedom for Berlin would be the first hole in the dike of the NATO defense structure which has stemmed the engulfment of Western Europe by the Soviets. To permit Berlin to fall before Communist pressures would be to abandon to the mercy of the Communists the more than two-and-a-quarter million West Berliners who have courageously stood their ground in the shadow of massive Soviet-bloc power. Such a loss would have a disastrous effect on the morale of free people everywhere.

Berlin, therefore, is a key test of Western determination and good faith in upholding the rights of free men against the encroachments of Communist power.

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As Professor Toynbee said:

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"West Berlin today is far more than just a city. It is a symbol of an indomitable determination to resist any further forcible extension of Soviet domination in Europe. ... if the West Berliners' will to resist Soviet pressure, or the Western world's will to support West Berlin's resistance, were ever to weaken, it seems likely that this failure of a symbol to live up to expectations would have far-reaching consequences.

"What is at stake here is something more than the local fate of West Berlin itself. This city's fall would change the whole balance of morale as between the Western and the Communist camps. It would give the Communist world a moral ascendancy over the West, and this might go far toward deciding the outcome of the cold war in the Soviet Union's favor. Through having become a symbol, West Berlin has come to stand not just for itself but for the Western world as a whole."

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Possible Arrangements with the Soviets on Berlin
Under Varying Hypotheses as to the Effectiveness
of the Western Deterrent

1. Three broad assumptions are possible about the Soviet reaction to the Western deterrent against execution of Khrushchev's threats on Berlin. They could be entirely impressed by it and thus seek some reasonably face-saving way out of the extreme posture to which they seem committed. They could be entirely unimpressed by it and hence be encouraged to proceed with their maximum program for unilateral action aimed at the Western position in Berlin. Or finally, they could be left in a state of doubt about our intentions, both believing and disbelieving the statements they hear and the evidence which comes to them of Allied preparations, and therefore be hesitant to move decisively without possibility of calling a halt but also unwilling to retreat or to accept any arrangement which could not be represented as a considerable achievement.
2. In assessing the kind of arrangement which would be open to the West under each of these three assumptions, we have considered both negotiability with the Soviets and the likely disposition of the Western Powers given a realistic appraisal of the true state of their deterrent. We have not tried here to discuss the implications of any arrangement for over-all US policy.
3. A further important factor is the point of time in the development of the crisis at which the deterrent takes hold or is clearly ineffective. It obviously will make some difference whether or not an arrangement is worked out in negotiations prior to a direct confrontation of force. Something which might be acceptable in one situation might be more difficult to swallow if it represented an obvious retreat to all the world. Thus a critical factor affecting the nature of a possible arrangement might be whether the Soviets have actually signed a peace treaty with the GDR. For the purposes of this paper, however, we assume that, at some point, there will come the moment of recognition that a solution must be found to the Berlin question to stabilize the situation and that the best formula under these circumstances will necessarily involve a certain saving of face for one or perhaps both parties.

Maximum Effectiveness of Western Deterrent

4. If, through actions taken in the forthcoming months, the Western Powers can convince the Soviet Union that to proceed with their announced course will involve a grave risk of thermonuclear war, the Soviets may be amenable

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to some sort of face-saving formula which would allow the *status quo* to remain substantially unchanged while, at the same time, permitting them to claim that they had been able to carry out at least some important features of their program. In this type of situation, it might be possible to achieve a tacit understanding with the Soviets so that the claimed effects of their signing a separate peace treaty with the GDR would be mitigated to the extent of preserving the essentials of the Western position in Berlin without an explicit new agreement. Assuming the Soviets' commitment to a peace treaty with the GDR to be an important one for them in prestige terms, we might take the line with them privately that we cannot, of course, stop them physically from signing a peace treaty with the GDR, although we could not approve or underwrite a treaty confirming the division of Germany and would have to oppose it publicly. On the other hand, we could point out that a major practical interest to us would be the effect which such a peace treaty would have on our position in Berlin. Provided that arrangements similar to those under the Bolz-Zorin exchange of letters were still continued in effect, the signing of the peace treaty need not necessarily precipitate a crisis involving our position in Berlin. We on our part could try to make the necessary adjustments.

5. Another conceivable type of face-saving formula for the Soviets under the most optimistic assumptions regarding the effectiveness of the Western deterrent might be simply an agreement that the four occupying powers meet

1/ In a letter from the Foreign Minister of the German Democratic Republic (Bolz) to Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union (Zorin), September 20, 1955, it was stipulated that:

"The control of traffic of troops and material of the garrisons of France, England, and the United States stationed in West Berlin passing between the German Federal Republic and West Berlin, will temporarily be exercised by the command of Soviet troops in Germany, pending the conclusion of an appropriate agreement. To this end, the transportation of military personnel or of garrison material of the troops of the three Western Powers in West Berlin will be permitted on the basis of existing Four-Power decisions:

- (A) On the Autobahn Berlin-Marienborn,
- (B) On the Railway Line Berlin-Helmstedt, with empty rolling stock being routed back on the Berlin-Gebisfelde Railway Line,
- (C) In the air corridors Berlin - Hamburg, Berlin-Bueckeberg, and Berlin-Frankfurt-Main."

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regularly at such levels as may be agreed to consider the German problem as a whole as well as the extension and development of contacts between the two parts of Germany. West and East German advisers might participate in line with the formula developed for the 1959 Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers. This might enable the Soviets to parade their virtue, stressing how in the interests of world peace they were willing to sacrifice just claims in order to have another attempt at settlement of the German question by negotiations, the real intent being merely to talk the subject to death in protracted discussions which both sides recognized from the outset could lead nowhere, while the status quo in Berlin continued unchanged.

6. It is, of course, extremely speculative to project into a situation where an actual clash of military forces has taken place in connection with a Western attempt to reopen surface access to Berlin. Apart from almost inevitable UN involvement, it seems likely that this would be a stage of what is sometimes described as "intensive diplomatic activity" in a desperate attempt to find some way of resolving an impasse that was clearly moving towards the use of nuclear weapons. What would be acceptable to either side under these conditions is difficult to say, but it might well be that a standstill perhaps accompanied by agreement to an emergency conference, would be the most likely thing to emerge. A formula similar to the second noted above might then become relevant in such a context.

Failure of Western Deterrent

7. A failure of the Western deterrent might derive from a collapse of nerve or general unwillingness of our NATO Allies to engage in a course of action in which they would consider the hazards far to exceed the objective to be gained. (Although this is obviously a crucial question, we may assume here that the US has decided not to go it alone and that a course of action involving the probability of thermonuclear war in response to full Soviet execution of their threats would not be supported by our NATO Allies.) Under these circumstances, although the cost in prestige would inevitably be very great, we would presumably be casting about for some means of extricating ourselves from an untenable situation in a way best calculated to maintain the Atlantic Alliance and to put the best face possible on a bad mess. Outright acceptance of the Soviet free city proposal would presumably go too far and provide too little camouflage. Moreover, we would presumably wish to move towards an arrangement not under the apparent threat of Soviet unilateral action but, if possible, within the context of formalized negotiations in which agreement would appear to emerge as the result of a certain process of give and take.

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8. An alternative failure of the deterrent might occur in terms of the Soviet response to a Western attempt to reopen access to Berlin by force. Depending on the assumption one has made as to escalation, residual possibilities of negotiation under emergency conditions might or might not then exist.
9. Under the circumstances indicated in paragraph 7, the Western Powers might find it desirable to consider some solution involving a change of status for the city of Berlin which would provide some protection for the liberty of the West Berliners beyond that involved in the Soviet free city proposal but at the same time be negotiable with the Soviets under the unfavorable assumption of a failed Western deterrent. Here such proposals as those for a "guaranteed city" or some sort of UN arrangement, which under other circumstances would be unacceptable to the French or Germans and would cause grave problems within the Western Alliance if advocated at the present time by the US, might be tolerable as the lesser of evils.
10. The proposal for a "guaranteed city" represents perhaps the most acceptable arrangement on Berlin which can be devised involving a change of juridical basis for the Western presence in the city. In essence, it would involve agreement by the Four Powers to guarantee the security of Western military and civil access to West Berlin, with the Western Powers agreeing simultaneously to suspend the exercise of their occupation rights so long as the agreement was otherwise being observed. The West Berlin authorities would be empowered to request that foreign troops up to a stated ceiling be stationed in West Berlin and each Western Power would agree to supply and maintain any forces so requested. Full and unrestricted access for these troops would be guaranteed. The agreement would be registered with the UN and a representative of the UN Secretary General might observe its fulfillment.
11. It is questionable whether, under the unfavorable circumstances stipulated, such a proposal would actually be negotiable with the Soviets. It might well be that the only kind of arrangement acceptable to them would be something which, starting from the free city concept, would provide a larger role for the UN than that allowed for by the Soviets in their proposal. It will be recalled that, in the Aide Memoire given us at Vienna, the Soviets provided that, as a guarantee of the free city, token troop contingents of the Four Powers could be stationed in West Berlin, and then went on to say that they would not object to the stationing of contingents of neutrals under the UN aegis for the same purpose. The status of a free city could be registered in due form by the UN and formalized by the authority of that international organization. The Soviets went on to say that they agreed to dis-

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cuss any other measures that could guarantee the freedom and independence of West Berlin as a free demilitarized city.

12. Under the latter formula, perhaps the West could suggest one of the broader types of UN solutions which have been advanced as possibilities. These might range through:

- a. Acquisition of all of Berlin by the UN as a World City, capital of the UN;
- b. Transfer of the UN Headquarters to Berlin, without necessarily changing the formal status of the city;
- c. Establishment in Berlin of a European Headquarters for the UN, with conference facilities, a permanent staff, et cetera;
- d. Transfer to Berlin of the headquarters of one or more UN specialized agencies;
- e. Establishment in Berlin of a UN Representative, as a UN "presence" in the city to investigate points of friction, et cetera;
- f. A UN trusteeship, or some similar status, for Berlin.

Soviets in State of Doubt About Our Deterrent

13. A third and perhaps more likely possibility than either of the two extremes of maximum effectiveness of our deterrent or complete failure of our deterrent would be the development of a situation where the Soviets are left in a state of doubt about the credibility of our deterrent. Under these circumstances, they might be hesitant to move decisively without the possibility of calling a halt, but they might also be unwilling to retreat openly or to accept any arrangement which could not be represented as a considerable achievement of their objectives. Such a state of mind on their part could, of course, involve a greater or lesser degree of doubt and this would affect the specifics of what they might accept. Under such circumstances, the possibility might exist of working out an arrangement which would be tolerable for both sides while avoiding the kind of direct confrontation of force which would strain the Western Alliance to the breaking point or constrain the Soviets to test the seriousness of our intentions

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14. The advantage of Solution C is that it might also be introduced during the course of emergency negotiations with the Soviets just prior to their threatened signing of a peace treaty and turn-over of responsibilities to the GDR authorities, or even conceivably after the actual signature of a peace treaty.

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